



---

## WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING TERMINOLOGY

1. AIR DROPS                      Fire retarding or suppressant drops from an aircraft
2. AIR TANKER                    Any fixed wing aircraft certified by FAA as being capable of transport and delivery of fire retardant or fire suppressant
3. ANCHOR POINT                An advantageous location, usually a barrier (natural or manmade) to fire spread, from which to start constructing control line. Used to minimize the chance of being flanked by the fire while the line is being constructed
4. AREA IGNITION                A large area of fuel is ignited almost all at once (simultaneously) – associated with extreme fire behavior or “BLOWUPS”
5. ASPECT                         The direction a slope is facing; its exposure in relation to the sun
6. ATTACK PHASE                All suppression work on a fire from initial attack through containment. It is not uncommon for larger fires to have segments of perimeter in each of the three phases of attack, mop-up, and patrol
7. BACKFIRE                        A fire suppression tactic. Any intentionally set fire used to consume the fuel in the path of a free burning wild fire
8. BACKPUMP                        A back pack container, for water, with a nozzle and hose used in suppression and mop up operations
9. BERM                              Dirt and rocks piled in a mound along the lower side of a trench



# INFORMATION SHEET #1 PROCEDURES HANDBOOK 4300

WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING  
TERMINOLOGY

10. BLACKLINING  
Preburning of fuels adjacent to a control line during periods of low fire behavior to widen and strengthen the line (strip burning)
11. BLOWUP  
A sudden increase in fire intensity or rate of spread sufficient to preclude direct control or to upset existing control plans. One or more of the following will usually be involved: prolific crowning and/or spotting, fire whirls, area ignition, or a strong convection column
12. BURN  
The area inside the fire perimeter, not including islands, where the fire has consumed all or much of the available fuel (black)
13. BURNING OUT  
Any intentionally set fire used to consume the fuel in an island or between the control line and the inactive fire perimeter (firing out)
14. CANOPY  
Leaves, branches, and limbs extending outward from brush and trees
15. CAT FACE  
Any scar or deformity of the trunk of a tree (originally, a scar caused by the blade of a CAT or dozer) or previous fire
16. C.C.V. (E.C.V.)  
Crew Carrying Vehicle (Emergency Crew Carrying Vehicle)
17. CHIMNEY EFFECT  
(CHIMNEY)  
Turbulent updrafts caused by wind flow restrictions, creating an increase in wind velocity often by narrow terrain
18. CHUTE  
Steep "V" topographic drainage feature



19. COLD LINE Control line or a segment of control line that is extinguished with no further action to be taken. All fire control activities have been completed including mop-up and patrol
20. COLD TRAILING Any procedure used to secure inactive sections of the fire perimeter, including but not limited to: constructing control line (scratch, wet, foam, retardant), trenching, scattering fuel, felling snags, feeling out hot areas with the back of the hand, and mopping up the fire perimeter
21. CONDUCTION Heat transfer through a material from a region of higher temperature to a region of lower temperature
22. CONSTRUCTED FIRE BARRIER A pre-existing improvement, such as a highway, dam, or plowed field, which will obstruct the spread of fire (“Manmade Barrier”)
23. CONTAINMENT Completion of a control line around a fire and any associated spot fires that can reasonably be expected to stop the fire’s spread
24. CONTROL LINE An inclusive term for all primary and secondary line(s) Constructed or natural fire barriers and treated edges used to control a fire
25. CONVECTION The transfer of heat by the movement of a gas or liquid
26. CONVECTION COLUMN The transfer of heat by the movement of a gas, as demonstrated by a rising column of smoke and hot gases above a fire



# INFORMATION SHEET #1 PROCEDURES HANDBOOK 4300

## WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING TERMINOLOGY

27. CROWN FIRE A fire that advances from top to top of trees or shrubs, more or less independently of the surface fire
28. DIME A slang term representing the ten (10) foot minimum working or walking distance between fire crew firefighters
29. DIRECT ATTACK A method of fire suppression that takes place on or near the fire perimeter
30. DOZER LINE Control line constructed by the blade of a bulldozer
31. DRIP TORCH A firing device consisting of a canister, a wick, and a fuel mixture, that is used in backfire and burnout operations, also called a backfire torch
32. DUFF Ground fuel of decomposing (rotten) organic materials, and humus immediately above mineral soil
33. DUST DEVILS (Whirlwind) A spiral of rising air, a small cyclone
- 33a. EQUIPMENT LINE Control line constructed by heavy equipment other than a dozer (i.e., excavator, fellerbuncher, plow)
34. ESCAPE ROUTE A preplanned and understood route firefighters take to move to a safety zone or other low-risk area. When escape routes deviate from a defined physical path, they should be clearly marked (flagged)
35. EXTREME FIRE BEHAVIOR A sudden increase in fire behavior or rate of spread sufficient to preclude direct control. One or more of the following will usually be involved: high rate of spread prolific crowning and/or spotting, fire whirls, or a strong convection column. (Blow-up)
36. FEELING FOR FIRE Feeling for heat, during mop-up operations with back of hands



# INFORMATION SHEET #1 PROCEDURES HANDBOOK 4300

WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING  
TERMINOLOGY

37. FINGER A long, narrow portion of a fire perimeter extending outward from the main body of the fire
38. FINISHED LINE Final control line or a segment of control line that has been completed to the point that further action to widen and/or improve the line should not be necessary
39. FIRE BEHAVIOR The manner in which a fire reacts to the influences of fuel, weather, topography
40. FIRE PERIMETER The entire outer edge or boundary of a wildland fire. Islands may create interior perimeters
41. FIRE SHELTER Personal protective equipment carried by firefighters which, when deployed, unfolds to form a pup tent-like shelter of heat reflective materials. Designed to provide last resort protection for a firefighter trapped by wildland fire
42. FIRE WHIRL A spinning mass of hot air and gases rising rapidly (like a tornado), as a dust devil or whirlwind carrying aloft smoke, debris, flames (Extreme Fire Behavior)
43. FIRELINE
- (1) An inclusive term used to indicate any area where fire suppression activities are occurring as opposed to incident base or incident command post activities are occurring. The term is often shortened to "line", as in "line assignment"
  - (2) A general term used to describe a line cut, scraped, or dug to mineral soil designed to stop the spread of a wildland fire



# INFORMATION SHEET #1 PROCEDURES HANDBOOK 4300

WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING  
TERMINOLOGY

44. FLANK ATTACK A fire suppression tactic where action is concentrated on the sides of the fire between the heel and the head
45. FLANKS Those portions of a fire perimeter extending from the heel to the head. The flanks are labeled left or right as viewed from the heel
46. FLAREUP Any sudden acceleration of fire spread or intensification of the fire. Unlike blowup, a flare-up is of relatively short duration and does not radically change existing control plans
47. FLASHY FUEL Available fuels such as grass, leaves, draped pine needles, fern, tree moss, and some kinds of slash which ignite readily and are consumed rapidly when dry (fine or light fuels)
48. FUEL Combustible material
49. FUEL BREAK A strip of land from which the fuel has been removed
50. FUEL MOISTURE Water content of a fuel expressed as a percentage of the oven-dry weight of the fuel
51. FUSEE Road flare type firing device used to ignite fire during backfire and burnout operations
52. GREEN An area of unburned fuel; generally, consisting of islands and areas outside the fire perimeter
53. GROUND FIRE Fire that consumes the organic material beneath the surface litter. (duff, roots or organic material in soil)
54. HAND LINE A fire control method where control line is constructed by personnel using hand tools and hand operated power tools



# INFORMATION SHEET #1 PROCEDURES HANDBOOK 4300

WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING  
TERMINOLOGY

55. HEAD FIRE The most rapidly spreading portion of the fire perimeter, usually to the leeward or up-slope
56. HEAVY FUELS Dead fuels over 3 inches in diameter, live fuels over 6 feet in height, and deep duff
57. HEEL (REAR) The slowest spreading portion of fire perimeter, usually upwind or down-slope and is generally opposite the head
58. HELIBASE The main location within the general incident area for parking, fueling, maintenance, and loading of helicopters
59. HELIPORT A permanent or semi-permanent base of operations for helicopters
60. HELISPOT A temporary landing location for helicopters, normally constructed on or near fire suppression operations for access of personnel and equipment
61. HELITACK A fire suppression resource consisting of a helicopter, a crew, and a helitender, or helicopter support vehicle with AV fuel
62. HELITACK CREW A group of firefighters specially trained in the tactical and logistical use of helicopters for fire suppression
63. HOOKLINE ORDER A slang term used to describe the sequencing of personnel and the tool configuration within a fire crew (fire crew order)



# INFORMATION SHEET #1 PROCEDURES HANDBOOK 4300

WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING  
TERMINOLOGY

64. HOSE LAY (PROGRESSIVE) A fire suppression tactic involving the extinguishment of successive increments of fire and the addition of lengths of hose at the nozzle as the previous length is extended. Laterals are usually installed every second length to maintain control and assist in mop-up
65. HOSE LAY (SIMPLE) A fire suppression tactic involving the extinguishment of successive increments of fire and the addition of lengths of hose at the nozzle as the previous length is extended. Hose tees and laterals are not installed
66. HOTSPOT A particularly active part of a wildland fire
67. HOTSPOTTING Slowing or checking the spread of a fire at points of more rapid spread or areas of special threat, often resulting in intermittent segments of temporary line
68. HUMIDITY See RELATIVE HUMIDITY
69. I.C.S. (ICS) Incident Command System, an organizational system designed for managing emergencies of all types and complexity
70. INCIDENT BASE That location where the primary logistics functions are coordinated and administered
71. INDIRECT ATTACK A method of fire suppression where suppression activity takes place some distance from the fire perimeter, often taking advantage of fire barriers
72. ISLAND An area of unburned fuel inside the fire perimeter
73. LADDER FUELS Fuels which provide vertical continuity between surface fuels and aerial fuels, thereby allowing fire to carry from surface fuels into the crowns of trees or shrubs with relative ease)



# INFORMATION SHEET #1 PROCEDURES HANDBOOK 4300

WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING  
TERMINOLOGY

74. L.C.E.S. (LCES) Fire Safety Acronym standing for Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes, and Safety Zones. This expression was created to reinforce the 10 Standard Fire Orders and 18 Watch Out Situations, not replace them
75. LEAP FROG METHOD An attack or mop-up method where action is initiated at separate locations. As each unit ties in with the line constructed by the preceding unit or resource, they move ahead to begin work on a new section
76. LIGHT FUELS Grass, pine needles, small bushes, twigs, and other fine wildland fuels
77. LITTER Surface fuels composed of dead sticks, branches, twigs, and recently fallen leaves or needles that are unaltered in structure by decomposition
78. MEDIUM FUELS Brush. Bushes, dead fuels under 3 inches in diameter, and live fuels less than 6 feet tall
79. MINERAL SOIL Bare dirt layer that is free of combustible materials
80. MOP-UP The act of making a fire, or any segment of a fire, safe by extinguishing or removing burning material along or near the control line, by felling snags, and trenching as required
81. NATURAL BARRIER An unimproved area devoid of combustible material, such as rivers, streams, rock outcroppings, etc.
82. NOMEX A generic term for wildland fire safety clothing that is made from this fire resistive material
83. OVERHANG Branches from bushes and limbs from trees that hang into, or over, the control line (Canopy)



84. PARALLEL ATTACK      A method of fire suppression in which control line is constructed parallel to, and just far enough from, the fire perimeter, to enable firefighters and equipment to work effectively. The intervening strip of unburned fuel is normally burned out as the control line proceeds, but may be allowed to burn out unassisted where this occurs without undue delay or threat to the control line
85. PATROL      The final fire suppression phase where resources are assigned to watch for fires in the unburned area or flare ups or hot spots within the burn which may escape the control line
86. POCKETS      Unburned fuel between the fingers of a fire
87. POINT OF ORIGIN      The location where a fire started
88. RADIATION      Transfer of heat in all directions in straight lines through the air
89. REBURN      The burning of an area where fire has previously passed and has left flammable fuel that ignites when burning conditions are more favorable
90. RELATIVE HUMIDITY      The ratio, expressed as a percentage, of the amount of water vapor in the air compared to the amount the air is capable of holding under the same conditions
91. RETARDANT      A chemical agent or substance which reduces the spread of fire and is usually applied by aircraft
92. SADDLE      A dip or pass in a hill or mountain ridgeline



# INFORMATION SHEET #1 PROCEDURES HANDBOOK 4300

## WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING TERMINOLOGY

93. SAFETY ZONE An area devoid of flammable material, can be natural or man made, used for escape in the event that fire threatens to overrun fire suppression personnel without utilizing a fire shelter
94. SCRAPE A slang term indicating that portion of the handline that is dug to bare mineral soil
95. SCRATCH LINE A quickly constructed, minimum width, unfinished temporary line where fuel has been removed to check the spread of fire. It may be constructed manually or mechanically
96. SECONDARY LINE A backup control line that is anticipated to become the ultimate perimeter of the fire should the primary control line fail to stop and hold the fire
97. SLASH Heavy concentrations of downed fuel resulting from such natural events as wind, fire, or snow breakage or such human activities as logging or road construction
98. SLEEPER FIRE A fire that remains inactive for a considerable time often following a lightning storm ignition (holdover)
99. SLOPE The up or down slant, elevation change or topographic relief of a hill, expressed in a percentage (%)
100. SLOPOVER Where a fire t crosses or “jumps” across a control line
101. SMOTHER To cut off the air supply to a fire
102. SNAG A standing dead tree
103. SPOT FIRE A fire, outside the perimeter of the main fire, that was started by sparks or hot embers from the original fire



104. SPOTTING A condition when one or more spot fires occur. (Severe spotting, or multiple spot fires, will often indicate or serve as a warning of potential extreme fire behavior)
105. STOB (STUB) (STAUB) A short stump left when a bush is cut; a brush stump
106. STUMP The base of a tree that is left in the ground after the tree is felled
107. SURFACE FIRE Fire that burns loose surface debris, including dead branches, leaves and low vegetation
108. TIE-IN The act of securing the end of a section of control line to a fire barrier or another segment of line. The term is also used to describe the location where that action took place
109. TOPOGRAPHY The characteristics of the ground; the lay of the land; includes such features as slope, elevation, aspect and relief
110. TRENCH A ditch and berm constructed to catch rolling material
111. UNDERCUT LINE A control line constructed on a slope below a fire; not to be confused with trench
112. VORTEX TURBULENCE High velocity whirlwinds trailing off the wingtips of an airplane, or from the rotors of a helicopter, causing turbulence and wind up to 25 mph. Vortices may reach the ground causing erratic fire behavior.
113. WIDOW MAKER A loose limb, or weak tree top that may fall unexpectedly and injure personnel working below



# INFORMATION SHEET #1 PROCEDURES HANDBOOK 4300

WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING  
TERMINOLOGY

---

114. WINDROW

A ridge or row of cut debris or litter created during construction of a control line